

These boots were made for...

Van Gogh's down at heel boots were the first thing to appear on the test website of the European digital library today. The website, branded **Europeana**, will break new ground by bring together millions of digitised resources from Europe's archives, museums, libraries and audio visual collections **through a single portal**.

The site model was previewed at a conference in Frankfurt last week to holders of digital content, including curators, archivists, publishers and librarians. They were shown how a user would be able to use sophisticated browsing and searching to find paintings, photographs, objects, books, newspapers, archival records, films and sound that have been digitised by Europe's heritage organisations.

The European Commission, a strong advocate of a European digital library, expressed its support for *Europeana*. Horst Forster, Director of Digital Content and Cognitive Systems in the Information Society Directorate, attended the conference, and commented, '*Europeana* is ambitious in its scale and scope. It's making the connections between the whole network of cultural heritage digitisation programmes in Europe, and promises to be a very powerful service. It will enable citizens to explore how ideas were transmitted between countries, how political or social trends developed, how artistic movements influenced the whole continent.'

Europeana is developing practical, user-defined tools for exploring and sharing content in a multilingual interface. The tools will make it easy for users to combine or compare related material across different countries – for example the artefacts, imagery, records and writings relating to the Roman Empire, the Vikings or the Renaissance.

Van Gogh's Pair of Shoes is also the starting point for *Europeana*'s promotional web video. Introduced by Nancy Sinatra's 1966 hit, *These Boots Are Made For Walkin'*, the video takes the audience on a series of journeys through Europe - on pilgrimage, seeking work and marching to war.

The purpose of the video is to encourage European institutions to make their digital content available to *Europeana*. As Martine de Boisdeffre, Présidente of the European Regional Branch of International Council on Archives said, 'Users expect to be able to connect the different types of cultural heritage material. To make this possible, organisations need to provide their metadata to *Europeana*. So many excellent digital resources lie below the surface of the web at present, and aren't easily located by search engines. *Europeana* will make this material accessible as never before'.

The demo of Europeana and the video can be seen at www.europeana.eu

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Notes for editors

- The **European digital library** project began to develop the *Europeana* web portal in autumn 2007 with funding from the European Commission. This is the first public showing of the look and feel of the site and its potential functions and content.
- Users' responses to the demonstration site are being [surveyed online](#) and in **focus groups** around Europe. Thorough testing will continue throughout the building of *Europeana*. This is being done to ensure that when the prototype is launched in November 2008, it will give users all the functionality that they expect.
- November's prototype will give direct access to at least **2 million digitised objects**, including books, photos, maps, sounds, films and archival records from Europe's libraries, archives, museums and audio-visual collections.
- The *Europeana* project is directed by the **European Digital Library Foundation**, which includes the following members:
 - Martine de Boisdeffre, EURBICA: European Regional Branch of International Council on Archives
 - Edwin van Huis, FIAT: International Federation of Television Archives
 - Claudia Dillmann, ACE: Association Cinémathèques Européennes
 - Massimo Negri, EMF: European Museums Forum
 - Elisabeth Niggemann, CENL: Conference of European National Librarians
 - Hans Geleijnse, LIBER: Ligue des Bibliothèques Européennes de Recherche
 - Christophe Dessaux, MICHAEL: Multilingual Inventory of Cultural Heritage in Europe
 - Wim van Drimmelen, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, national library of the Netherlands
 - ICOM Europe: International Council of Museums, Europe
 - CERL: Consortium of European Research Libraries
 - INA: Institut National de l'Audiovisuel, France
 - Bundesarchiv, Germany
- *Europeana* is hosted by the **Koninklijke Bibliotheek**, the national library of the Netherlands, and led by the Conference of European National Librarians.
- The project is one of the Commission's flagship **i2010 initiatives** to create a European Information Society for growth and jobs (see [IP/05/643](#)).
- On 25 August 2006, the Commission adopted a Recommendation on digitisation and digital preservation (see [IP/06/1124](#) and [MEMO/06/311](#)) which urged EU Member States to set up large-scale digitisation facilities, so as to accelerate the process of getting Europe's cultural heritage online via the European digital library.
- In November 2006 the idea of a European digital library was strongly endorsed by the Culture Ministers of all EU Member States and was recently backed by the European Parliament in its [resolution](#) of 27 September 2007.
- More information about *Europeana* can be found at <http://www.europeana.eu>

With thanks to the Van Gogh Museum Foundation, Amsterdam, and the Vincent van Gogh Foundation for permission to use van Gogh's Pair of Shoes in the *Europeana* demo and video.